

hear the evidence, and deliberate upon the crime and probable guilt of the party; when condemned, the sentence is ratified by the chiefs drinking the tuah, or toddy, which is final, and may be considered equivalent to signing and sealing with us.

I was very particular in my inquiries whether the assembly were intoxicated on the occasions of these punishments. I was assured it was never the case. The people take rice with them, and eat it with the meat, but no tuah is allowed. The punishment is always inflicted in public. The men alone are allowed to partake, as the flesh of man is prohibited to women (probably from an apprehension they might become too fond of it). The flesh is not allowed to be carried away from the spot, but must be consumed at the time. I am assured that the Battas are more attached to these laws than the Mahomedans are to the Koran, and that the number of the punishments is very considerable. My informants considered that there could be no less than fifty or sixty men eaten in a year, and this in times of peace; but they were unable to estimate the true extent, considering the great population of the country; they were confident, however, that these laws were strictly enforced wherever the name of Batta was known, and that it was only in the immediate vicinity of our settlements that they were modified and neglected. For proof, they referred me to every Batta in the vicinity, and to the number of skulls to be seen in every village, each of which was from a victim of the kind.

With regard to the relish with which the parties devour the flesh, it appeared that, independent of the desire of revenge which may be supposed to exist among the principals, about one-half of the people eat it with a relish, and speak of it with delight; the other half, though present, may not partake. Human flesh is, however, generally considered preferable to cow or buffalo beef, or hog, and was admitted to be so even by my informants. Adverting to the possible origin of this practice, it was observed that formerly they ate their parents when too old for work; this, however, is no longer the case, and thus a step has been gained in civilization. It is admitted that the parties may be redeemed for a pecuniary compensation, but this is entirely at the option of the chief enemy or injured party, who, after his sentence is passed, may either have his victim eaten, or he may sell him for a slave; but the law is that he shall be eaten, and the prisoner is entirely at the mercy of his prosecutor.